

# **Cedar River Instream Flow Commission**

## ***Final Minutes***

### **SPU Water Quality Lab**

February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013

#### **Organizations/Members Present:**

- Seattle Public Utilities -- Tom Fox, Rand Little, Karl Burton
  - Seattle City Light – Liz Ablow
  - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife -- Peggy Miller
  - NOAA Fisheries --Randy McIntosh
  - Army Corps of Engineers -- Lynne Melder and Larry Schick
  - Washington Department of Ecology -- Buck Smith
  - King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks -- Kate Akyuz
  - Guests: Chris Magirl (United States Geological Survey)  
Frank Urabeck (Adaptive Management Work Group)
- 

- I. Call to Order:** Tom called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM.
- II. Approval of Agenda:** Approved as presented.
- III. Approval of Draft Minutes:** December's draft minutes were approved as presented and finalized.
- IV. News and Notes:** Buck mentioned that the DOE had just hired a new staff member to help process water right applications. This is the first such hire in a long time. Governor Inslee has said he wants to provide 20 million dollars for Yakima River improvement projects including fish passage facilities and habitat restoration projects. Lynne said that the Corps is currently under a hiring freeze due to the imminent potential federal sequester under which, the Corps may have to reduce their budgets by 10%. Water Management real-time regulation would not be affected by the cuts.

**V. Real Time Water Management:**

***Hydrologic Conditions:*** Chester Morse Reservoir's approximate elevation is 1552', nearly ½' above the suggested flood pocket. Precipitation in January was well below average but the Tolt Basin did receive more rain than the Cedar Basin. December's precipitation was also below average but lots of it fell as snow because, for most days, the snow level was below 2000'. With the

colder than normal weather in January, much of the December snow has remained and snowpack conditions are substantially above average in the Tolt (138%) and slightly below average in the Cedar (98%). The 8-week moving average for inflows is slightly above the 10 percentile level. Drier than normal weather is expected for the next 10 days and Tom expects to ramp up flows to meet supplemental flow levels for sockeye outmigration starting on February 11<sup>th</sup>. SPU expects to meet the supplemental flow targets until mid April as long as we do not experience unusually dry conditions. Currently, the flow in the Cedar River is approximately 800 cfs at the USGS gage below Landsburg Diversion Dam (12117600). Since October, the high flow in the Cedar River has been approximately 1500 cfs below the diversion. In December, natural flows would have been higher than actual flows, which was also the case for most of January, except late January when actual flows were higher than predicted natural flows. On February 1<sup>st</sup>, downramping rates changed from 2" per hour to 1" per hour. All downramping requirements were met successfully since the last meeting. Water consumption rates have been very close to last year with a 7-day moving average of approximately 100 MGD. Cumulative diversion is also nearly the same as last year and well below allowable levels prescribed in the Muckleshoot Agreement. Currently, the dynamic rule curve is calling for a flood pocket of 1549' and the elevation of Chester Morse is 1552'. In another week the dynamic rule curve will have increased the flood pocket target to 1550'. SEAFM is indicating that the reservoir will not fill to 1563' if we have a 1 in 5 dry year, although the elevation will be close to full. SPU will have a better chance of refill if the reservoir does not go below 1551'.

**Lake Washington:** The lake reached its target winter elevation of 20' on December 1<sup>st</sup>, and that elevation has been maintained. Lake refill will begin on February 15<sup>th</sup> and the Corps expects to follow the normal refill curve. It is too early to tell if there will be as much spill (in terms of volume and duration) as there has been in the last two years. The Corps is using a private contractor to install the smolt flumes this year and the work is expected to begin in mid-April.

**Weather:** The weather has followed a neutral pattern this winter. In these conditions, there can be large storms and flood events, but this year we have not yet seen flows above the new scour threshold (2200 cfs, Renton). The snow level was consistently below 2000' in December, which is unusual. In January, we experienced robust snow storms early followed by an extended dry spell with an intense inversion. At the time of the inversion, we had well above average snowpack so the melting that did occur was not problematic. Larry said to expect rain tonight in the lowlands and between 6" and 14" of snow in the mountains. After that, the forecast calls for 5 to 7 days of drier than normal weather. There are no big storms expected for the next 10-14 days. The medium range forecast calls for average precipitation and average temperatures for the rest of the winter. Larry reminded the IFC that there have been no major flooding events in March in the Puget Sound region.

***Fish Update:*** Rand reported that the inclined plane trap was deployed in the lower Cedar River on January 24<sup>th</sup>. Karl mentioned that steelhead and trout redd surveys will begin in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of March.

## **VI. Supplemental Studies:**

### **Peak Flow Adaptive Management Study Phase II**

Topic 1 – Sockeye Redd Scour Verification Study. Rand reviewed a meeting Karl and he had with Chris Magirl and others from USGS. Chris helped develop the sampling plan using the 20 potential sites that were scoped during a float trip in November. Due to the plan to excavate redds, SPU will need to apply for an HPA and, therefore, egg depth sampling will not occur this year but will occur as redds are formed in the next sockeye spawning season. Rand gave a brief review of the historic scour studies in the Cedar River. Chris outlined the sampling plan and how the plan was developed. Buck mentioned that the WA conservation Corps may be able to help with accelerometer deployment. Rand told the IFC that Holly was concerned that there weren't enough unconfined sample sites and the IFC decided to add one more site in the landslide reach. Karl will work with Hans Berge at KC to determine the exact site location in that reach.

Chris mentioned that he was thinking about setting up a raft trip down the Nisqually so the IFC could see a lowland river that is not artificially confined or heavily impacted by development. The IFC agreed that would be a good idea and Chris said he would contact a Nisqually Tribal biologist to set up the logistics.

The IFC decided to discuss topic 3 before topic 2 due to time constraints. Randy voiced some concerns about reaching any meaningful outcomes using the experimental reach approach. Eventually the IFC decided that the next step was to develop a list of geomorphic and biologic metrics that could be used to track improvements in that reach.

Rand passed out some alternative definitions of off channel habitat and asked the IFC to think about what definition they would like to see applied to the proposed study. The IFC will finalize a definition at the next meeting. Tom reminded the IFC that they had agreed to have a joint meeting with the Adaptive Management Work Group. He suggested having the meeting at the new Army Corps building. Lynne said she would look in to reserve their big meeting room for the first Wednesday in March or April. Tom also said it may be a good idea to have a locks tour for the IFC at a future meeting and May was proposed as a potential time to do that. Chris reminded the group that the float on the Nisqually would be best in May or June.

**VII. March 6<sup>th</sup> IFC Meeting:**

- 1) Discussion of the Peak Flow AMP phase 2.
- 2) Logistics for the Nisqually float trip

**VIII. Meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM**